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The Kore (1)

1. One also hears "Kote" and, in the Bani region, "Kwere." It should be noted that these three words, Kore, Kote, and Kwere, all have an ending which is frequently found in Soninké but not in Bambara.

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The Kore is particularly popular in the Bani region, that is to say, the riverine area of this tributary of the Niger, in the part that is on a line with Ségou.

This brotherhood has the peculiarity of having a cult which honors the three divinities always worshiped by the Bambara: the manes, the god of the soil, and the nyana of the boli. Therefore the site of the brotherhood is the chosen site of the god of the soil, usually a tree within a grove (Kore-tu, "grove of the Kore") near the village. A kara, that is, the little board symbolic of the dead, and a surku-kongolo (skull of a hyena), the boli of the Kore and for that reason called the Kore-kongolo (skull of the Kore), are kept here.

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The clergy and its assistants form a large body of personnel that includes all of the faithful. [281]

In addition to the high priest, Kore-tigi, there are the "people of the kara" (kara-ma-u) and the persons who wear masks, called wara-u (1) (wild beasts) or sogo-u (savage animals),

1. The terms wara or sogo are usually applied to all those who have some function, from the suruku to the ngoni-sama.

among whom are hyenas (suruku), lions (dyara), and monkeys (sūba). The persons in costume, called Kor'dyuga (2), are for the

2. The term seems to come from the Soninké language: Kore yugo or Kor'-dyuga, "man of the Kore." The expression Koré-duga-tigi is a corruption

CHAPTER 2

LINGUISTIC DATA

A. Linguistic Classification

197 According to the classification by Delafosse (1), Bambara or

1. Delafosse, Langues du Soudan [Languages of the Sudan] (Meillet and Cohen, Les Langues du monde [Languages of the World]).

Banmana is a dialect of the Mandé or Mandingue language, which in turn belongs to the central subgroup of the Nigerian-Senegalese languages. It is, then, very close to the Dioula, Kassonké, dialects, which belong to the same Mandé language and which are spoken by peoples with whom the Bambara cohabit geographically. (The differences with the Soso, the Soninké, and above all the Peul are much more marked).

Among the Nigerian-Senegalese languages, Mandé is distin- 193 guished chiefly by four traits: 197

1. The nominal forms have almost completely disappeared.
2. Noun and verb are distinguished only by their respective places in the sentence.
3. Conjugation includes a large number of verbal aspects.
4. The subject, noun or pronoun, precedes the verb.

The disappearance of the nominal forms marks an important evolution in comparison with the archaic language, in which they are, on the contrary, of pronounced importance. Of all the Mandé dialects, Bambara appears to be the most advanced. It is characterized particularly by its extreme conciseness and by the deformation words undergo through excessive contraction.

B. Morphology

193 Bambara makes no differentiation by inflexions: nothing indicates whether a word is subject or object, whether a verb is present or past, active or passive. The words are absolutely invariable and

193 are combined only by juxtaposition. To distinguish nuances of thought, the role of the word in the sentence, one has only the context and auxiliary particles to go by.

The distinction between the sexes is marked only by adding the words "male" or "female" to the root. The plural is formed by adding [15] to the substantive the suffix "w" and the necessary figure or the adverb "many."

Person, tense, and mood of the verbs are distinguished in like manner. The root remains invariable, and one expresses the accessory idea of person by personal pronouns, and the ideas of tense and mood with the aid of particles placed before or after the verbal root. The neutral or passive voice has but one special tense: the past, while the active voice includes three tenses, or more exactly, three aspects.

The first indicates that an action is not completed (this can be, then, a present or a future).

The second implies that the action is completed or that a state has been reached or still exists (this is approximately a past tense).

The third refers to an action which is to be completed in the present, past, or future under the influence of another action or another subject (this may render our subjunctive, our imperative, our optative, and, in general, the infinitive complement of a verb).

C. Syntax

Bambara is extremely simple. Whether the clause be relative, interrogative, or conditional, the word order is not changed. This uniformity, this monotony of style, does not preclude eloquence, but it lies all in the action, the gesture, the tone of voice, the repeated use of onomatopoeia and of particles like "dɛ́," "kwo," "kɛ́."

D. Vocabulary

192 This poverty of syntax is not accompanied by a poverty of vocabulary nor by an impossibility to express abstractions. The Bambara express very easily, and in a manner intelligible to all, ideas of belief, of hope, of ethics, of religion. The most striking characteristic of their vocabulary is the constant comparison of man